



General Assembly

Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
7 December 1998
English
Original: French

Third Committee

Summary record of the 13th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 October 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hachani (Tunisia)

Contents

Agenda item 103: Advancement of women (*continued*)

Agenda item 104: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (*continued*)

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98-81645 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 103: Advancement of women (continued)
(A/53/38/Rev.1, A/53/72-S/1998/156, A/53/87, A/53/95-S/1998/311, A/53/167, A/53/203, A/53/318, A/53/354, A/53/363, A/53/376, A/53/409 and A/53/447)

Agenda item 104: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (continued)
(A/53/72-S/1998/156, A/53/87, A/53/95-S/1998/311 and A/53/308)

1. **Mr. Ball** (New Zealand) said that several milestones in the pursuit of greater protection for human rights had been attained in the course of the year, the most important of which was the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While progress had been made towards the elimination of gender-based discrimination, that goal was far from being attained because women were not yet fully exercising their fundamental rights despite the international standards and strategies which had been adopted to that end. Over the past 50 years, it had been recognized that women's rights were an integral part of human rights. New Zealand was gratified that the review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had helped ensure that recognition of women's fundamental rights was a priority. The impetus must be sustained because Governments and the United Nations would have to give an account of measures taken to honour the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women. His delegation looked forward to participating in the high-level review in the year 2000, along with non-governmental organizations, to develop strategies for overcoming barriers to the implementation of the Platform for Action. In accordance with the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women, New Zealand had taken steps to improve statistics and information on women. A detailed time use survey which was under way would provide information about how women used their time, in particular on unpaid work in their homes and in the community. If women's legal equality was to become a reality, there must be a better understanding of the causes and consequences of women's inequality. In June 1998, New Zealand had presented to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women its combined third and fourth periodic reports describing the steps taken to eliminate discrimination against the women of New Zealand. Issues raised by that Committee regarding unpaid maternity leave had been referred to a parliamentary committee. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had commended the

legislation and programmes adopted by New Zealand to combat family violence. The work of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women had made an important contribution to understanding how violence perpetuated inequality. New Zealand also welcomed the establishment of the International Criminal Court and in particular the provisions in its Statute regarding the needs of women and children who had been victims of international crimes.

2. With regard to the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women in the Secretariat, the Secretary-General and all components of the United Nations system must take the necessary steps to ensure that the goal of gender equality was achieved at all levels in the Secretariat. His delegation welcomed the close cooperation between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that a gender perspective was mainstreamed into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system, and supported the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women that gender equality and women's empowerment goals should be integrated into the reform process of the Organization. It supported the efforts made by the Secretary-General and entities within the United Nations system to achieve the strategic objectives identified at Beijing. The work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and the activities of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women was very useful.

3. Lastly, New Zealand considered that an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women would be a significant step in enhancing implementation; it hoped that the text would be completed at the next session of the working group.

4. **Mr. Najem** (Lebanon), recalling that the international community attached particular importance to the empowerment of women in order to ensure gender equality, said that the Fourth World Conference on Women and its preparatory work had served as a catalyst for the advancement of women, the improvement of their status and recognition of their role in development and the need to protect their fundamental rights and freedoms. Lebanon, which had participated actively in the Conference, had established a national follow-up committee, incorporated the question of the equality of women in its laws, and promoted the participation of women in national institutions, in cooperation with regional organizations such as the League of Arab States and United Nations bodies. The continued Israeli occupation in the south and in the Bekaa plain had repercussions on the whole of Lebanon and, in particular, on the situation of women, many of whom had been the

victims of physical and psychological torture inflicted by the Israeli forces. As had been recognized at the Fourth World Conference on Women and in other forums, the presence of foreign armed forces prevented women from enjoying their fundamental rights; all peace-loving countries which were concerned about protecting the rights of women must assist the Lebanese women who were subjected to Israeli occupation.

5. **Ms. Samah** (Algeria) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women represented a high point in women's fight for recognition of their rights and, thanks to the adoption of a comprehensive and coherent Platform for Action, had signalled the commitment of the international community to act together and with determination in order to restore to women the full enjoyment of their rights. Giving women the opportunity to exercise their political, economic and social rights would make amends for the grave injustices which they suffered and would help them gradually to achieve equal status with men. Although it was undeniable that the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was above all the responsibility of Governments, the United Nations had a role to play and a mandate to fulfil, specifically by ensuring coordination and follow-up of measures for the advancement of women, including within the Secretariat. The high-level meeting held during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council had led to the formulation of recommendations with a view to reinforcing the framework for action and increasing the mobilization of resources, the inadequacy of which might in the long term jeopardize the success of the planned activities.

6. Having won equal status with men through their efforts during the struggle for national liberation, Algerian women had, in the period following the recovery of national sovereignty, resolved to contribute to the building of a new, democratic and pluralist Algeria. They had therefore become active partners whose interests were duly taken into account in the economic and social policies pursued by the public authorities. In addition to the Constitution, which established the principle of equality between women and men, and the laws governing the various sectors of activity, the authorities had taken measures aimed specifically at women, including the establishment of the National Council for Women, a consultative body concerned with the advancement of women and made up of government representatives and representatives of the women's association movement, the introduction of a revised family code in Parliament and active support for the women's association movement in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. With the right to vote and to run for office, Algerian women

participated actively in decision-making concerning the future of their country (indeed, women accounted for more than 50 per cent of eligible voters and were well represented in elected bodies). In the field of education, the authorities had made education for girls a priority, particularly in rural or isolated areas, and had taken a number of measures to make it easier for them to obtain an education.

7. **Ms. Morgan-Moss** (Panama), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group of countries, said that the Heads of State and Government of that group had expressed at all their summits their firm support for the cause of women's rights and equality for women and had recognized that it was important to guarantee special protection for women and girls. The seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago (Chile) from 19 to 21 November 1997, had taken stock of the obstacles which hindered participation by women in decision-making and those which were linked to poverty. The Santiago Consensus represented a new step in efforts aimed at ensuring the equality of women in the area of human rights. The leaders' wives, for their part, were supporting the policies for women undertaken in their countries, fully aware that they must meet the same challenges and that only a concerted effort would bring about development in accordance with national priorities.

8. The Rio Group was aware of the excellent contribution made by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, when it had organized a forum gathering together persons specialized in the areas of action approved in the Beijing Platform for Action. She noted the presentation made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, for whom the growing importance which her office attached to women's economic and social rights was a means of ensuring women's full integration into and equality within society.

9. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women would celebrate its twentieth anniversary on 18 December 1999. Despite the progress made, however, more effort was necessary, as proved by the work undertaken since 1996 to develop an optional protocol which would place the Convention on the same footing as the major international human rights instruments and help to ensure the protection and effective promotion of women's basic rights. In that context, the Rio Group reaffirmed its commitment to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in particular article 40 of the Programme, and called for the negotiations on the optional protocol to the Convention to be finalized at the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The Rio Group also

called on non-governmental organizations to continue participating in the work of the Commission and reminded the media of their responsibility to provide the public with information which would change stereotypes concerning women by depicting them in such a way as to stress their contribution to society. The Rio Group would spare no effort in meeting women's expectations for equality in the next millennium.

10. With regard to progress made in Panama in the advancement of women, she said that in 1992 a forum on women and development, enabling women of all backgrounds to have an exchange of views, had been held with the participation of non-governmental organizations, civil society and public bodies. A national plan on women and development had then been drawn up and a coordinating body of organizations for the full development of women (CODIM) had been established. In 1995 the National Council for Women and the National Office for Women, sectoral mechanisms represented in most public institutions, had been established. An agreement signed with the European Union in 1996 had led to the creation of a programme for the promotion of equality of opportunity in Panama which would be implemented in the following areas: general interest policy and gender equality; non-discriminatory education; gender issues; empowerment of and participation by the public; action against violence against women and other priorities; and increased awareness within society. The Government had created a Ministry for Youth, Women, Children and the Family which was responsible for the implementation of social policies, the promotion of human development, gender equality and popular participation. Measures for the effective provision of maternal welfare services were envisaged, although in some cases, women entering the workforce were requested to undergo a pregnancy test. Abortion was forbidden, although authorized in cases of rape or if the pregnancy endangered the mother's life. Land was being distributed to indigenous peoples, a process which should help to promote community-based development, benefiting indigenous women in particular.

11. Legal and administrative changes at the national level reflected the Government's efforts to implement the commitments undertaken at the Beijing Conference. There was a real political will to remedy the most visible aspects of discrimination against women in Panama.

12. **Mr. Acemah** (Uganda), having noted that Uganda had signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and was committed to the advancement of women, said that, in common with many African countries, Uganda had a patriarchal society

in which tradition and customs played a major part in hindering the advancement of women. The role of Ugandan women had long been limited to performing domestic chores under extremely difficult circumstances so that, to date, women constituted only 20 per cent of the formal employment sector. Over the past decade, however, his Government had adopted policies and programmes aimed at achieving the speedy advancement of women and correcting gender imbalances. To that end, four key areas had been identified: first, a law reform process had been set in motion in 1995 with the promulgation of a new Constitution that provided for temporary affirmative action in favour of women, which had already been implemented in many sectors of the economy. In addition, all other laws that were discriminatory against women, including the Penal Code, were under review. Secondly, in the belief that education was essential for the advancement of women, his Government had taken concrete measures to encourage their enrolment at the university level. As a result, female enrolment had risen to 33 per cent of the total enrolment in universities. In 1997, Uganda had launched a universal primary education programme which had increased the number of female students attending school by 80 per cent and would significantly reduce illiteracy levels among women. Thirdly, his Government believed that the participation of women in the decision-making process was a means of ensuring that decisions at all levels catered for the special interests of women. Hence, at the cabinet level, 12 per cent of ministers were women and the Vice-President of Uganda was a woman, while each of its 45 districts had a woman representative to Parliament. Moreover, women were free to compete for the other parliamentary seats with men, as a result of which the percentage of women members of Parliament had risen to 18.5 per cent. At the local level, they were also entitled to one third of the membership of the executive committees. Fourthly, it was essential to ensure the economic empowerment of women. Since their lower status was due to unequal access to and control over productive resources and benefits, his Government, together with non-governmental organizations, was endeavouring to make credit more available to women with a view to enabling them to participate effectively in the country's economic and social development.

13. Although significant progress had been achieved, much remained to be done. More resources were therefore necessary, as was the eradication of practices that were harmful and degrading to women. Furthermore, due to rebel activities in some parts of the country, women continued to be caught up in situations of armed conflict. His Government was committed to finding a peaceful and lasting resolution

to those conflicts and thus end the suffering of all those affected. Having expressed his gratitude to all the countries, United Nations agencies and non-governmental agencies which had worked with his country, he appealed for further assistance with a view to pursuing the goals set for the advancement of women in Uganda.

14. **Ms. Martinez** (Ecuador) said she fully associated herself with the statement made by the Panamanian representative on behalf of the Rio Group and said that, since 10 August 1998, Ecuador had had a new Constitution which substantially improved the status of women. The State was thus bound, for example, under the provisions of article 23, paragraph 2, of the Constitution to adopt the necessary measures to prevent, eliminate and curb violence in general and against women in particular, while under article 41, it was required to incorporate a gender perspective into all plans and policies. Her Government had also finalized its equal opportunities plan for the period 1996–2000. With regard to education, it had drawn up new programmes aimed at incorporating a gender perspective into teacher training at the Institute of Education and had published training modules on gender issues with a view to eliminating sexual stereotypes and discrimination against women. It was also devising a national plan to reduce maternal mortality and had recently promulgated a law aimed at improving working conditions for women, as well as a law aimed at combating violence against women and within the family.

15. Her delegation welcomed the quality of the reports before the Committee, in particular the report on the status of the Convention against the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/53/318) and the Secretary-General's report on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women (A/53/354). In that connection, she endorsed the request made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for States to withdraw their reservations to the Convention. Although the genital mutilation of women was not a traditional practice in Ecuador, her Government nonetheless participated in the efforts to abolish such practices in all the regions concerned. It was also committed to ending the equally deplorable practice of cruel behaviour to which women were traditionally subjected in the home.

16. Ecuador had participated actively in the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which should make the Convention more effective, and it was ready to pursue negotiations with a view to reaching a consensus. Completion of the elaboration of the Draft Optional Protocol

would be an ideal means of marking the twentieth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force.

17. **Ms. De Armas** (Cuba) said that the situation of women at the threshold of the new millennium continued to be very hard owing to serious problems, including poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy, which affected women in particular. Their situation was particularly dramatic in the developing countries, where it was exacerbated by foreign debt, structural adjustment programmes and the consequences of globalization.

18. Access to resources continued to provide the key to attainment of the goal of equality, development and peace for women set by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In the current unipolar world, huge sums of money were destined for the arms race that should instead be allotted to progress, welfare and development. It was therefore essential to establish a new climate of international cooperation that would make it possible to mobilize new resources for health, education, training and other activities directed to the advancement of women.

19. Cuba was pleased that universal ratification of or accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women appeared to be within reach. It supported the open-ended working group to elaborate a draft optional protocol to the Convention as well as efforts by United Nations bodies to include a gender perspective in their work. It was essential, however, that activities for the advancement of women should be financed from the regular budget and receive additional resources.

20. The implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had given rise to many activities in Cuba. The Council of State had adopted a national plan of action in April 1997 for the follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women which had been published in brochure form to make it easier to disseminate to the people. The plan was in addition to the many activities which the Cuban Government conducted in the social sector, amply demonstrating that it was possible to change the status of women if there was the will to do so.

21. Currently, Cuban women were in a fairly enviable situation: they made up 36.8 per cent of the work force, 27.6 per cent of legislators, 41.7 per cent of researchers, 64 per cent of technicians and upper-level managers, 60 per cent of students and 30 per cent of directors in economic, social and political fields. The maternal-mortality rate was only 2.2 per 10,000 live births. But their situation would have been much better if the United States of America had not subjected Cuba to a criminal and unilateral economic, financial and trade embargo and had not adopted extra-

territorial laws which violated its sovereignty and ran counter to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. That embargo had been imposed on Cuba despite the will of the international community, which had once again been expressed by the recent adoption, by 157 votes to 2, of a General Assembly resolution demanding that it should be lifted.

22. Cuba was not unaware that determined efforts must continue in order to reach the goals which the international community had set for itself in Beijing. The establishment of an atmosphere more conducive to cooperation, which was first and foremost the responsibility of the United Nations system, would facilitate the task for States.

23. **Ms. Boyko** (Ukraine) said she shared the views expressed in the Committee that specific measures must be taken to ensure that the basic rights of women were an integral part of human rights, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action. The full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be given priority in national, regional and international activities. Her delegation welcomed the progress made by the open-ended working group on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention, and considered that the work could be carried out within existing resources. Moreover, better cooperation was needed between the respective international bodies, in particular those in the United Nations system, and the regional structures.

24. Ukraine attached special importance to the practical implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and was about to complete the setting up of a national mechanism to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women. It was making efforts to implement its National Plan of Action for the period 1997–2000, aimed at improving the situation of women and upgrading their role in society. Equal rights for men and women were guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine and other relevant legal instruments, including the codes on marriage and the family, employment and criminal procedure. Ukrainian legislation was in conformity with the convention. More and more women were participating in political life and in the activities of some 70 women's organizations in the country. At the same time, the status of women was influenced by various negative factors. The major problems, mainly caused by socio-economic difficulties, were a decline in the quality of health care, a falling birth rate, an increase in infant mortality and the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. The current birth rate did not even provide for the replacement of the population. Nevertheless, her delegation was grateful to the international community and the relevant organizations, particularly the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for assistance in minimizing the consequences of Chernobyl.

25. Ukraine was deeply concerned by the problem of trafficking in women and children, which affected all the countries of Eastern Europe. It was important to improve cooperation and the exchange of information at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels and to set up a database in collaboration with Interpol and other relevant agencies. In April 1998 the President of Ukraine had signed a law on criminal responsibility for trafficking in persons which stipulated the punishment for persons involved in any way with such trafficking. A programme for the prevention of trafficking in women, conducted by non-governmental organizations within the framework of the FARE and TACIS programmes, had also been launched. Her delegation also welcomed the efforts of the International Organization for Migration, with the support of the United States and the European Union, in launching a broad information campaign aimed at drawing the attention of young women and girls to the dangers of trafficking in women.

26. **Ms. Ramírez** (Argentina) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement of Panama on behalf of the Rio Group, and with the statement of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China made at the previous meeting. If there was one area where women had made progress, it was undoubtedly their participation in political life. In every country of the world, women of all social classes were active participants in public life. There should be no illusions about that progress, however; the basic rights of many women, to education and medical care in particular, were ignored simply because they were women.

27. Her delegation welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General on the status of women, which, *inter alia*, stressed the need for education, and on trafficking in women and girls. It supported in particular his recommendation to strengthen measures to combat trafficking and to provide assistance to its victims.

28. Since the beginning of the 1990s, there had been a great number of activities for the advancement of women in Argentina. A National Council of Women had been established to oversee the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and in 1991 a law establishing electoral quotas for women had been passed. In March 1998, on the occasion of International Women's Day, the President of Argentina had launched a programme to combat discrimination against women aimed at providing equal employment opportunities and equal rights to vocational training. Also in 1998, the Government had launched the Federal Plan for Women to

strengthen national, provincial and municipal institutions for the advancement of women, and a national women's information system was currently in place. The Argentine Institute for Statistics and the Census would participate in those activities by developing gender-disaggregated indicators in all economic and social fields.

29. Her delegation hoped that the working group on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention would be able to complete its work quickly, so that the protocol could enter into force in the year 2000. She also hoped for a successful outcome of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in June 2000.

30. **Ms. Kimliková** (Slovakia) expressed appreciation for the fact that the Commission on Human Rights, at its fifty-fourth session, had held a special meeting on the status of women, and that it had placed the question of the fundamental rights of women and gender perspective on the agenda for its fifty-fifth session. She noted with satisfaction that the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women were working more closely together, and that the issue of gender balance had been mainstreamed within the United Nations system. Slovakia, as a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 1993, had submitted its initial report under the Convention, and that report had been considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in June 1998.

31. In accordance with the relevant international conventions, Slovak law contained no provisions that were discriminatory towards women. All citizens of Slovakia, both men and women, enjoyed the same rights, which were guaranteed by the Constitution. Slovak women regarded themselves as fully emancipated, a fact that was confirmed by data published in the 1998 *Human Development Report*, which indicated that Slovakia was one of the 24 countries in the world where women controlled at least 41 per cent of family income. Her delegation acknowledged, however, that prejudices relating to the traditional view of the role of women in society had not completely disappeared, either in Slovakia or elsewhere in the world. As evidence, it was only necessary to consider women's participation in decision-making, especially in the political arena.

32. With respect to the implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Conference, in 1996 Slovakia had established a Coordination Committee on women's issues consisting of members representing Parliament, governmental bodies, churches, women's non-

governmental organizations, research institutions, the armed forces and the private sector. The Committee had prepared a national plan of action for women during the coming decade, and that plan would constitute the key policy document underpinning the advancement of Slovak women. Lastly, her delegation welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/100, by which the General Assembly had decided to convene, in the year 2000, a high-level plenary review to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Platform for Action, and to consider further actions and initiatives.

33. **Ms. Al-Hamami** (Yemen) said that her country, as a pluralistic democratic State, was committed to equality between men and women, which was guaranteed by the Constitution and the law. In point of fact, Yemeni law contained virtually no provisions that were discriminatory towards women. In practice, however, it would be appropriate to promote participation by women and encourage their access to education, so that they could achieve equality with men in all fields and at all levels. Such equality was a long-term objective that would require support from the country's authorities and would have to be accompanied by real political will. Currently, the various economic sectors were accessible to women. Furthermore, in a development that would have been inconceivable only a few years earlier, women held senior positions in the country's judiciary; there were 32 women judges and 35 women lawyers in Yemen, and there were 102 women diplomats. Participation by women in the parliamentary elections held in 1997 had unquestionably been a major event, providing them with an opportunity of showing what a vital role they could play in Yemeni society. Yemen, which had the utmost regard for the principle of equality between men and women, had taken part in many international conferences on the issue and had become a party to the relevant conventions.

34. Despite the Government's efforts, Yemeni women still did not have full access to education, health services and employment. They were at greater risk of illiteracy and poverty, and consequently were frequently not in a position to understand their rights. For that reason, in accordance with the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Government of Yemen, acting on a decision of the Council of Ministers, had instituted a national commission for women in 1996. That commission would be entrusted with preparing action plans and strategies aimed at improving the status of women in both rural and urban areas. In addition, a national women's conference had been held in March 1997, at which the groundwork for a national

strategy for women had been laid and a plan for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action had been formulated. Non-governmental organizations and the private sector had joined in Government-led efforts by participating in various programmes and seminars aimed at the advancement of women.

35. At the international level, Yemen was participating in the work of the various relevant organizations, including the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNESCO. It was also receiving assistance from the European Union and such countries as Germany and the Netherlands for the implementation of projects designed to benefit Yemeni women. Emphasizing the efforts of the United Nations over the past four decades to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, she said that it was time to strive for concrete results. She called upon the international community to redouble its efforts and to cooperate more closely in order to attain the objective of equality between the sexes, in accordance with the principles set forth in the various relevant instruments.

36. **Ms. Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) said she wondered whether it would be feasible, given the stagnant condition of the international economic environment, fully to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The recommendations of the Beijing Conference fell into two categories: those requiring a favourable economic environment for their implementation, and those requiring political mobilization. Where growth was inadequate and there were not enough resources available for such sectors as health and education, women tended to be more severely affected; they were also more vulnerable to the risk of poverty. However, the issue of the advancement of women involved not only resources but also political will on the part of Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector.

37. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that to date some 162 States had become parties to the Convention, and considered that ratification or accession by all States by the year 2000 was a feasible objective. Concerning follow-up to the Beijing Conference, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had updated its statistical data on women. A study had been conducted, with the assistance of the United Nations Population Fund, to assess the status of the country's women, a necessary task in the absence of data broken down by sex, and to prepare a national plan of action. The study had focused on four major points: the concept of gender perspective, the identification of strategies and actions

deserving priority, participation by women, and the integration of national strategies.

38. Without waiting for the completed national plan of action, Côte d'Ivoire had already taken follow-up action to implement the recommendations of the Beijing Conference. Two bills were before the National Assembly, one that would prohibit genital mutilation and violence against women, and the other dealing with sexual harassment in schools. Steps had been taken with a view to encouraging school enrolment and literacy for women, alleviating poverty, encouraging women to start their own businesses, and making it easier for them to rise to senior positions in the diplomatic service, the armed forces, the administration, the police and the judiciary. Furthermore, numerous non-governmental organizations had undertaken a variety of activities in the fields of health, education and agriculture that were aimed at enhancing the status of Ivorian women.

39. **Ms. Mdoe** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made at the previous meeting by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the statement made by Malawi on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community. The United Republic of Tanzania, which was firmly convinced that its greatest asset was its people, and wished to ensure the equal status of women stipulated in its Constitution, had participated actively in the work of the Fourth World Conference on Women. It had then drawn up a national plan of action aimed at promoting the legal and economic empowerment of women and improving their access to social services, including health, education, training and employment.

40. In that context the Tanzanian parliament, on the recommendation of her Government, had passed legislation stipulating that at least 15 per cent of the members of parliament must be women, and at least 25 per cent of the seats at the local government level should be reserved for women. Furthermore, her Government, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, had made efforts to sensitize the public and members of parliament to the universal nature of fundamental rights and, in 1996, had adopted a community development policy which provided for the implementation of a programme for the advancement of women incorporating the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

41. With regard to violence against women, on 1 July 1998 the Tanzanian parliament had adopted an act which imposed a life sentence on anyone convicted of sexual abuse; other stringent laws had been adopted, such as an act which made female genital mutilation a criminal offence. Her

Government realized that those measures in and of themselves were not enough to resolve the problem of violence against women but believed that their strict implementation would help significantly improve the situation.

42. If the commitments made in Beijing were to be fully realized, Governments must have the will to adopt the necessary policies and introduce new legislation and needed to have access to sufficient resources. In terms of political will, her Government had already demonstrated that it would not be found wanting. It had not only had the text of the Convention translated into Kiswahili but was also striving to integrate a gender perspective into all its policies. In terms of resources, the situation was considerably less encouraging, since the United Republic of Tanzania was constrained by immense economic difficulties. The enormous burden of external debt servicing, coupled with the structural adjustment programmes prescribed by international financial and monetary institutions, were preventing it from investing in such fundamental areas as education, nutrition, health care, water supply and sanitation, less still promoting the advancement of women.

43. In order to enable the Governments of developing countries to live up to the commitments made in Beijing, the international community must take concrete measures to alleviate their economic problems. In particular, it should review the problem of external debt so that the 20/20 compact for human development agreed to at the World Summit for Social Development would be respected. To the same end, it should increase the levels of official development assistance envisaged at that conference and other major international conferences. The United Republic of Tanzania was pleased to note in the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the Convention (A/53/318) that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had refined its method of preparing lists of questions on periodic reports, thereby enabling States parties to the Convention to submit more comprehensive and objective reports.

44. **Mr. Garcia Gonzalez** (El Salvador), stressing the major role played by the Convention in promoting the advancement of women, said that the Convention and the measures taken at the global level had led El Salvador to modify its legislation and institutions and adopt a family code aimed at ensuring respect for gender equality, the elimination of discrimination against women, and the protection of young people, the disabled and older persons. A national institute for the development of women had been established and entrusted with formulating national policy with regard to women, promoting their status and ensuring

gender equality. Among its initiatives, it had established progress banks and microenterprises and drawn up family welfare programmes. The banks had allocated loans to 13,500 women to help them ensure the subsistence of their families, and the family welfare programmes had assisted 30,000 women victims of domestic violence through the "red telephone" system.

45. At the regional level, the seventh regional conference on the integration of women, held in Santiago in November 1997, had led to the adoption of the Santiago consensus which set forth the obstacles encountered by the women of Latin America and the Caribbean in respect of participation in political life and decision-making and the difficulties they encountered in general. With regard to traffic in women and girls for the purposes of prostitution, steps had been taken at the national and municipal levels to combat the causes, and police raids to expose and close brothels had been stepped up. Amendments had also been made to national legislation and municipal decrees. El Salvador was sponsoring resolutions on the question in various United Nations bodies. It was also supporting the concerted efforts that were being made at the international and national levels with the assistance of non-governmental organizations and civil society to organize awareness campaigns on the problem.

46. **Mr. Powell** (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that although the right to food was a human right, one person in five was going hungry, or over 800 million people in the world. Since women had the main responsibility for the food security of families, resources that were allocated to them benefited children much more than resources allocated to men. In order to ensure an equal place for women in society, their role in that sphere must be recognized. By reducing inequalities in the allocation of resources, the prosperity of families and of communities in general could be enhanced.

47. The World Food Programme distributed tons of food every year and helped assist the most vulnerable groups enjoy the fundamental right to food. For lack of adequate resources, it had adopted policies and strategies aimed, in particular, at assisting the most disadvantaged populations. Resolving the problem of hunger should be one of the major priorities of the international community. Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, WFP had established a programme with the objective of reducing the inequalities hindering the participation of women in all areas of national life by facilitating their access to education and training.

48. In many countries, conflicts were preventing populations from securing food. According to statistics, three in four victims of wars, drought and natural disasters

were women and girls, and that must be taken into account in distributing emergency food aid. The ultimate objective of WFP was to assist the largest possible number of people in meeting their food needs. To that end, donors must target their objectives more accurately. The approach followed by WFP was currently needs-based. By promoting the increased participation of women in food distribution it should be possible to adopt a rights-based approach, in which the beneficiaries would be directly involved. WFP believed that women should assume responsibilities and exercise control over the distribution of food supplies.

49. **Mr. Paiva** (International Organization for Migration (IOM)), referring to trafficking in women and girls, said that the expansion of that hugely lucrative business exposed migrants to abuse and exploitation. Trafficking in women and girls was therefore simultaneously a migration issue, a criminal issue and a gender issue that was a part of the larger migration picture. The reasons that drove migration, such as poverty, lack of employment opportunities, scarce national resources and political and economic instability were, in fact, at the root of the problem of trafficking. Trafficking in women, furthermore, was linked to organized crime and lax or corrupt law enforcement. The gap between the demand for foreign labour and the diminishing legal channels of migration in most countries provided the opening which organized crime had been quick to exploit. Trafficking in women and girls violated their basic human rights. By way of combating trafficking in migrants, IOM was serving as an intermediary for the sharing of information and experience, conducting policy-relevant research, assisting Governments to strengthen their capacity to deal with such trafficking, and carrying out programmes to assist the victims. Over the previous four years, IOM had sponsored more than a dozen global or regional meetings on migrant trafficking in various parts of the world, most recently in Ukraine in July 1998. Documentation on the activities at that meeting was available on the Internet. IOM had also recently furnished the European Union with an analysis of data and statistical resources available in European Union member States on trafficking in humans and particularly women and children. The IOM programmes for building country capacity to manage migration included harmonization of migration legislation, training in the detection of trafficking and fraud and in entry and exit control. Its programmes also advocated measures such as effectively criminalizing the actions of traffickers, dealing more humanely with the victims, authorizing them to remain in a country on humanitarian grounds, and ensuring witness protection and assistance in returning to their countries. More would have to be done to publicize the actual

experience of countries, in order to share best practices and improve the treatment accorded to trafficked women and girls.

50. As important as those measures were, they would in many cases come too late for the victims of trafficking. It was particularly urgent to deal with the traumatic consequences of the experience they had lived through. IOM had therefore also organized the return and reintegration of migrant women who had been subject to abuse. A pilot project under way in South East Asia had helped over 300 women and children to return from Thailand to their home countries where they were helped with reintegration. IOM was also arranging voluntary return in other regions, notably Central America and the Baltic region. To deal with the growing challenge of trafficking in women and girls, Governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations from sending, transit and receiving countries must work hand in hand.

51. **Ms. Pavlic** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO continued to give priority to questions involving gender equality in all fields within its competence, namely, education, science, culture and communication. The eradication of poverty and the establishment of a culture of peace being its two overriding objectives, UNESCO devoted much of its attention to the empowerment of women because they were the primary victims of poverty and violence.

52. Gender mainstreaming was high on the UNESCO agenda and its secretariat had introduced gender-specific budget codes and gender-sensitization for its staff, and was endeavouring to increase its recruitment and promotion of women to higher Professional and management posts, and to apply a system of accountability, especially at the higher management level. Concomitantly, UNESCO also had to assist the majority of its member States to make gender mainstreaming a reality. The recently held UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education had shown that in spite of the secretariat's efforts to integrate the gender component into all aspects of the Conference, the role of women in higher education and in development had remained a separate issue and its debate had been attended mostly by women. Despite the Director-General's explicit appeal to Governments to increase the percentage of women in their delegations to 50 per cent or even 30 per cent, women had in fact constituted only 20 per cent. That underlined the pertinence of the terms of the declaration adopted by the Conference. The UNESCO World Conference on Science that was to be held in Budapest in June 1999 was being organized in conjunction with UNIFEM and major non-governmental organizations. Preparatory regional meetings

would take place in Argentina, Australia, Burkina Faso, Italy and Slovenia in the coming months.

53. In connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNESCO was widely publicizing the text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been printed in the format of a wallet-sized *Passport to Equality* in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese (that last, thanks to the UNESCO office in Rio and to the Brazilian authorities). The *Passport* was being publicized by non-governmental organizations, such as the International Federation of Women in Legal Professions, which was also undertaking a worldwide study of the Convention, in particular of article 10 on education. The *Passport* was going to be printed in Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Russian, Swahili and Urdu, with the help of United Nations agencies, Governments and private foundations.

54. As part of the commemorations, two other initiatives had been taken. A scholarship fund for poor rural African girls had been set up by UNESCO — FAWA (Forum of African Women Educationalists) to enable them to pursue secondary, technical and vocational studies. The second initiative was the publication of a third, improved and updated edition in English and French of the *UNESCO Guide to Non-sexist Language*, to be distributed during the UNESCO international conference on human rights to be held in Paris from 7 to 9 December 1998.

55. Regarding the implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNESCO continued to promote literacy and basic education, including adult education, as a fundamental prerequisite for the empowerment of women. Its efforts were increasingly being linked to those of other United Nations agencies to enable poor women to have access to credit. Emphasis was also placed on facilitating the access of women to relevant political and economic information through ambitious initiatives such as a project being executed by the Netherlands. The promotion of the role of women in developing a culture of peace assumed their access to information of crucial importance to peace efforts and the exchange of that information among women within countries and across borders. Steps in that direction were being planned with major women's networks in Africa.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.